



Newsletter

Real Solutions to U.S. Energy Problems

Americans are suffering from soaring prices at the pump and skyrocketing home heating bills. And the prices are just the start of the problem. Now that the Administration finally has acknowledged that this country is dangerously hooked on oil, Tom is leading the way on many Congressional initiatives to reduce our energy consumption and dependence on fossil fuels.

“Our nation’s security depends on our

investing in and developing alternative energy resources,” he points out. “But more importantly, we must be much more conscientious about conservation. We need a real energy policy that will reduce dependence on foreign oil and be better for the environment.”

That is why he is co-sponsoring the Fuel Efficiency Truth in Advertising Act (H.R. 1103), which requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure that

consumers know the real mileage per gallon of every vehicle on the market, and not some estimate based on ideal road conditions that exist only on the test track. Under this bill, the EPA would revise its vehicle fuel economy test procedures to take into consideration higher speed limits, faster acceleration rates, variations in temperature, and the use of air conditioning and other features in a vehicle that can deplete fuel.

Tom also supports H.R. 3762, which calls for a 10 percent increase in corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards by 2016 for all automobiles manufactured after 2008.

He is also a co-sponsor of the Energy for Our Future Act (H.R. 4384). This bill makes more tax credits available to people who purchase qualified hybrid vehicles, and allows for tax credits to manufacturers of energy efficient vehicles. At the same time, the bill amends the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (H.R. 6) to repeal oil and gas royalties and to eliminate incentives for natural gas production in the shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

And Tom is a strong supporter of the New Apollo Energy Act (H.R. 2828), which encourages research and development within the United States into ways to reduce greenhouse gasses. The bill also amends the Clean Air Act to set forth a renewable fuel program.



Supporting new sources of energy - As the accompanying article indicates, Tom strongly supports the search for alternative fuels, as well as efforts to improve vehicle fuel efficiency standards in this country. He recently visited the Department of Energy to learn more about studies there into alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind power. Here he discusses nascent hydrogen research with Steve Chalk, the department’s hydrogen program manager.

Protecting Civil Liberties

Tom was outraged to learn that the federal government was secretly eavesdropping without court permission on Americans’ overseas telephone calls. He strongly supports holding a bipartisan inquiry into the legality of this practice.

Congress passed the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act nearly 30 years ago to protect Americans against federal snooping without court approval. Tom insists that the Administration follow the law, or ask Congress to consider changing it to accommodate the modern terrorist threat.

On another civil liberties front, Tom voted against extending the Patriot Act in December and again in February because some of its provisions have been found to be subject to civil liberties violations.

“There was much to recommend the Patriot Act in the wake of 9/11, when it was needed to boost efforts in the war on terrorism as it got under way,” he said. “But its provisions were deliberately not made permanent so that Congress could adjust them as needed. And the Administration has abused some of those provisions.”

“We have found that the Patriot Act gives the government too much authority to poke into people’s private transactions, including their medical records and what they read,” he said. “It provides search powers without the usual checks against potential abuse. This is too big a sacrifice to make in the name of homeland security.”

Americans Deserve Integrity in Government

Tom has long supported measures to eliminate corruption and cronyism in the federal government. And he is appalled by the culture of deceit that has pervaded Washington lately, so he is helping lead the charge for reform.

A Democratic proposal introduced in Congress at the start of the year will ban gifts and travel from lobbyists, prohibit favoritism in key administration appointments and end the practice of last-minute, “dead of night” personal earmarks on spending bills.

It’s called the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act, and it will bring an end to the abuses of power that we have been seeing under the current Congressional leadership.

“It is not just about individual malfeasance,” Tom said. “This undue influence has very real effects across the country, raising costs for consumers while rewarding industry and the very wealthy.

“We are now seeing the result of the Medicare ‘reform’ bill that was passed by the House in the middle of the night in late 2003. Seniors are paying more for drugs, and the most vulnerable members of our society cannot get their medications at all. And states such as California are being forced to step in to support patients with immediate aid to pay for prescriptions.

“The energy bill passed last summer rewards oil and gas companies even as they enjoy record profits. A second energy bill that Congress passed this fall adds another \$3.5 billion in subsidies for the energy industry, but cut out important provisions to prevent price-gouging.

“We need to restore truth and trust to our government, and put the priorities of the American people first.”



Recognizing a lifetime of service - Tom recently paid tribute to Sister Mary Rose Christy, who has made multiple contributions not only to the Bay Area community, but also the international community. A registered nurse holding degrees in social work and political science, for decades she helped the poor and the underprivileged by working in hospitals, advising legislators for better social service programs and creating such programs herself. Tom said in a statement for the Congressional Record that "Christy's colleagues describe her as a determined activist with a huge heart. Her determination allows her to help many. She never takes no for an answer. Christy's humility is evident when she describes herself as just one American among many who has helped those in need. Christy is proud of America's tremendous willingness to serve others."

Honoring a great Samaritan - Tom made a Congressional Record statement on behalf of John Kelly, who has been working to make our community a better place since the 1970s. Mr. Kelly is the former executive director of Samaritan House, which provides assistance to approximately 12,000 homeless and low-income area residents every year. In 1991, Mr. Kelly began a program for inmates at San Quentin State Prison called Kairos, a three-day workshop with spiritual talks, singing and discussions. He visits the prison weekly, attending mass and leading spiritual discussions with the hope of trying to change even the hardest of criminals. Photo by Dana Yates, San Mateo Daily Journal.



Cleaning up the Medicare Mess

This year Medicare began offering prescription drug coverage through new private coverage and managed care plans. The new program is incredibly complicated. Worse, our most vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities are falling through the cracks. Many are being denied medications or having their drug coverage abruptly terminated.

Tom was among those who voted in late 2003 against the legislation creating this new program, which benefits insurers and drug manufacturers but does little for seniors. Instead of improving Medicare, which seniors and persons with disabilities have relied on for years, the program was turned over to hundreds of private insurers who can charge what they want, cover what drugs they want, and

change what they cover practically at will. And instead of Medicare negotiating low drug prices for our seniors, insurance companies are making their own deals with drug companies.

Tom believes we need to go back to basics, make the choices between plans more simple, clarify the benefits and let the federal government negotiate lower drug prices. He's backing efforts to make these changes. He also is co-sponsoring legislation to repay California for covering the costs at the start of the year for emergency prescription drugs to all those vulnerable people whose benefits were suddenly cut off. And he will continue to fight to reverse the damage done by the special-interest bill that masqueraded as Medicare reform.

Where You Can Learn More

For further information on the changes to Medicare, contact these organizations:

Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program:

1-800-434-0222

www.calmedicare.org

Medicare:

1-800-MEDICARE

(633-4227)

www.medicare.gov

Social Security Administration:

1-800-772-1213

www.ssa.gov/prescriptionhelp

Callers should have this information at hand:

- Medicare identification number (on the Medicare card)
- Current prescriptions, including dosage, and how much they cost
- Refill schedule

Securing Permanent Protection for Spectacular Coastal Lands



Preserving Open Space - Here's the latest piece of wilderness that Tom has helped preserve by adding to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area with his legislation. Rancho Corral de Tierra has important watersheds, miles of public trails, beautiful views and diverse plant and animal life, including threatened and endangered species. Photo by Robert Buelteman, courtesy of Peninsula Open Space Trust.

Tom's years-long effort to add 4700 acres to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) in San Mateo County has paid off: his Rancho Corral de Tierra Golden Gate National Recreation Boundary Adjustment Act has just been signed into law.

"Preserving our country's unique natural areas must be one of our highest national priorities, and it is one of my highest priorities as a Member of Congress," Tom said. "We must protect these areas for our children and grandchildren today, or they will be lost forever."

The legislation had the enthusiastic support of environmental groups, as well as the GGNRA-Point Reyes National Seashore Citizens Advisory Commission and the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. In addition to the 4076-acre Rancho Corral de Tierra site, one of the largest tracts of undeveloped land along the San Mateo coast that includes Montara Mountain, approximately 800 acres of state property near Devil's Slide would be included in the recreation area.

Rancho Corral de Tierra boasts panoramic views, important watersheds, miles of public trails, and an array of plant and animal life, some of which are threatened or endangered. The property's current owner is the Peninsula Open Space Trust, who bought the property to save it from development.

The GGNRA is the world's largest urban park, with more than 75,000 acres of land and 28 miles of coastline including Alcatraz, the Marin Headlands, Muir Woods, and the Presidio. Through legislation that he has championed in past years, Tom has been a major force to maintain and add sites on the Peninsula, including Sweeney Ridge, the Phleger Estate in Woodside, and Mori Point in Pacifica.

"Our Rancho Corral de Tierra addition includes one of the largest undeveloped parcels of the San Mateo County coast south of the city San Francisco," Tom noted. "It is spectacularly beautiful territory. Our permanent protection will preserve unique coastal habitats of threatened, rare

and endangered plant and animal species. It will curb future disruptive development along the Pacific coast, and will provide important scenic and recreation opportunities for millions of our residents and visitors from all across the globe."

Pushing for Congressional Action to Secure Explosives Nationwide

Tom continues to keep the focus on the need to secure high explosives at storage facilities nationwide. He is urging speedy House approval of legislation tightening security requirements at explosives storage facilities nationwide after the theft in New Mexico of 400 pounds of high explosives and other dangerous substances in December.

"This shocking crime clearly shows the urgent need for Congress to act, in the interest of national security, to plug loopholes in the federal guidelines on how these materials are stored," he said. "We will redouble our efforts to ensure that our legislation gets speedy consideration."

Tom has been investigating the role of Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) in inspecting and regulating security at the nation's explosives storage facilities. After 200 pounds of explosives were stolen from a sheriff's department facility in San Mateo County, California, in July 2004, the Committee on Government Reform's Subcommittee on National Security, led by Tom and Representative Chris Shays, conducted a hearing to exam-

ine law enforcement and other public explosives storage facilities around the country. They discovered then that the BATF did not know how many such facilities there were in the country, much less where they were and whether they were adequately secured.

Following an October 2005 hearing, the two legislators introduced H.R. 4422, the Safeguarding Explosives for Homeland Security Act, to increase federal regulations at non-licensed explosive storage facilities by requiring an audible alarm or video surveillance.

Eliminating Human Trafficking Through U.S. Law

In January, Tom's bipartisan bill to crack down on trafficking in persons became law.

"Let the world know that the United States will not tolerate human trafficking," Tom said as Congress passed his legislation. "This scourge has enslaved thousands of men, women and children, forcing them into war, labor and the sex trade against their will. This is a human rights violation of extraordinary magnitude. Our government must continue to urge other countries to combat it."

"Trafficking can only be contained and then eradicated with the help of local law enforcement and social service agencies, which have

the contacts in the community to identify trafficking victims and criminal rings," he said.

The legislation provides for increased focus on labor trafficking, launches an initiative in the critical area of child soldiers, establishes new programs for federal-state partnerships in the area of trafficking here in the United States, and provides for robust funding of U.S. anti-trafficking programs.

The U.S. Justice Department reports 600-800,000 people are sent across international borders each year in a state of near or actual slavery, with 15-20,000 coming to the United States.



Protecting Human Rights - Tom recently held an event with two men who are working to ensure the end of genocide. He is pictured here with Paul Rusesabagina, whose courageous efforts to save scores of Tutsis and moderate Hutus were dramatized in the film "Hotel Rwanda," and Boubacar Jallow, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). They discussed legislation sponsored by Tom that deals with the 1994 Rwanda genocide, praises the ICTR's diligent work and affirms the intention of Congress to work to ensure that such atrocities do not take place. The conversation also focused on Tom's leadership in gaining Congressional recognition of the situation in Darfur, Sudan as a genocide, and his continuing work to urge the international community to intervene.



Gratitude on Animals' Behalf - The Humane Society of the United States has just named Tom a "Humane Champion" for his work in improving animal welfare. The group's executive vice president for external affairs, Miachal Markarian, is shown here presenting the award to Tom and his little friend Rosie. Among the efforts mentioned by the group is the bipartisan Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (H.R. 3858), which would require state and local agencies specifically to include people with pets and service animals in their disaster evacuation plans. The legislation came about in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which caused untold numbers of people to make the horrible choice between being rescued and ensuring that their household animals were safe.

Ombudsman

Removing a Bureaucratic Obstacle to Federal Medical Payments

A U.S. Postal Service worker who retired after being injured on the job recently called Tom's San Mateo office for help in resolving a claim filed for federal disability payments. The constituent had received emergency treatment after having a seizure, and had sent the medical bills to the Labor Department's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), which had denied payment on the grounds that since she no longer was working, the incident could not be considered an on-the-job injury.

However, her doctor judged that the seizure had been due to side effects of medication approved by the OWCP to treat the disability, and this was affirmed by an electronic brain scan that was part of the disputed emergency medical treatment. But evidently, this decision had been overruled.

Tom's San Mateo staff contacted the OWCP claims examiner, who explained that the neurosurgeon conducting the brain scan had not filed a report to substantiate its findings. After hearing from the neurosurgeon that he hadn't known where to file the report, the staff gave him the right address and encouraged him to get the job done. A few days later, the OWCP's claims examiner called to confirm that the report had arrived and that the bill would be paid immediately.

Ombudsman

Reuniting a Family and Defeating a Drug Cartel

Reynalda Alvarado of Redwood City has peace of mind and the comforting company of her son, thanks to Tom's intervention on her behalf.

In a situation that was beginning to look hopeless until Tom stepped in, the Alvarados had to contend with years of delays and hitches in the U.S. immigration process and a rising threat from thugs in a drug cartel.

Reynalda, who had moved to California in 1983 and became a naturalized US citizen, had filed a petition with several years ago to admit her son, Juan Carlos to the United States from Mexico. But officials at the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez reported that they had not received documents that they had requested from Reynalda by mail. They therefore considered the case abandoned. Ciudad Juarez was very far both from Reynalda in California and Juan Carlos in their village of Aguillilla.

Reynalda turned last fall for help to Tom's office in San Mateo, which confirmed that the case was no longer active and ensured that Reynalda could file a second petition on Juan-Carlos'


behalf.

But then things turned ugly and the case became more urgent. Local members of a drug cartel learned that Juan Carlos was a horticulture expert for a fruit company, and tried to recruit the young man. When he turned them down flat, they jumped him in the middle of a street and threatened his life. Juan Carlos immediately took a leave from his job and hid with relatives.

When U.S. Consulate officials said that, due to the number of other visa petitions that needed to be processed by their overwhelmed office, it could take at least another nine months for Juan Carlos even to obtain an interview for visa consideration, the Alvarados began to lose hope.

However, on Tom's insistence, once they knew the full details of Juan Carlos' situation, Consulate officials arranged an expedited interview. There were then some other paperwork hurdles to clear, but in short order the process was completed and Juan Carlos was able to join his mother on the Peninsula, where he is now taking classes at a local adult school.

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